



The Aruba Tourism Authority honors Mirto Granadillo, an icon of Aruba's Tourism Industry

On Wednesday evening, the Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort and the Aruba Tourism Authority (ATA) hosted over seventy representatives from five Latin American countries during one of the many events of the CATA conference, which is taking place this week. The highlight of this "Undersea Fantasy" was a surprise tribute to the man that devoted thirty years to the development of Aruba's Latin American market, Mirto Granadillo, the ATA Director for Latin America. In the opinion of those that have been with the ATA for many years, and know its history, Mirto is the man who almost single-handedly opened and developed that market, through years of selfless devotion.

A nostalgic presentation of the thirty-year career of Mirto with pictures and commentary was presented to the gathering, with reminiscences and words of praise from Mario Arends and Juancito Giel, colleagues of the past in the Caracas ATA office. Minister of Tourism Edison Briesen extolled the many accomplishments of Mirto Granadillo over the years, with his wife Maria by his side. Along with Myrna Jansen, Director of the ATA, the minister was proud to present to them a painting commissioned from noted artist Maria Theresa Martinez depicting Mirto and Aruba's famous landmark, the California Lighthouse. In addition, a beautifully engraved glass trophy was awarded to Mirto for his many dynamic years of service from the Occidental Hotels and Resorts. Ydelsa Javier, Director of Sales for Latin American and Guimar Rodriguez Torres, Director of Sales for Colombia for the hotel chain made the presentation.

Mirto became a well-known figure to the leaders of Latin American tourism during his very active career building connections and convincing airlines from Colombia, Brazil, Argentina and Ecuador to establish flights to Aruba. From a single office in Venezuela he established a thriving market in five countries and never stopped, always proud to promote his beautiful homeland to a growing market looking for a delightful place to vacation. Mirto reports that he "suspected something cooking" when he noticed colleagues rummaging through his desk and taking pictures from his drawers, but was too busy preparing for this year's CATA Conference to give it much attention. "These thirty years have been the biggest part of my life," confesses Mirto, "I have seen so many grow up....it is like a big family. Thirty years is a long time, but it was very interesting, the time just flew away."

Mirto joined the ATA in 1976 from a career in the airline industry and took a position as assistant to the head of the Caracas office. Within a year he took over the directorship. He realized that Aruba had to grow beyond the Venezuela office, and then opened the Colombia office, expanding Aruba's influence to Argentina and Brazil. When Mirto started with the ATA Aruba had less than 1000 hotel rooms, and he "has seen the Latin America market practically born and raised," during his years of service.

Mirto is retiring this year and looks forward to being back on his "dushi island." An illustrious career will likely guarantee that he can look forward to being consulted on a regular basis and his sage advice will be most welcome.